

Indiana Department of Correction Goes Green

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By Sarah Etter,

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J. David Donahue,
Commissioner

The recent partnership between the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC) and energy consultant company Johnson Controls is helping four of the state’s corrections facilities use corn for more than just a dinner side dish. The IDOC is creating energy through the use of biomass corn boilers in an effort to save money and reduce waste.

“We’re going to burn corn for energy,” explains IDOC Commissioner J. David Donahue. “We’re excited about this opportunity. This technology has been used in other institutions before, but never in a corrections environment. We are tying up a lot of revenue in natural gas right now, and that just gets more expensive every year.”

Since corn is a cash crop in Indiana, the IDOC will also pump revenue back into the state’s economy.

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Across the country green energy, or environmentally friendly, alternatives are cropping up in corrections facilities. Some green energy initiatives involve generating power from windmills or solar energy.

Last week, Wisconsin Governor, Jim Doyle, signed an executive order for corrections to go green as well, but Indiana is the first to switch to a new fuel source, a trend that many state officials hope will continue to spread across the country.

Environmentally-friendly energy

This fall, the four Indiana facilities will start using biomass corn boilers, water conservation devices and new environmentally-friendly lighting fixtures to conserve energy, which could save tax payers an estimated \$7 million.

“It’s all about using sustainable power. Corrections is one of our biggest growth markets and we’re having a large impact in the field,” says David Peters, Regional Solutions Manager for Johnson Controls. “The price of gas has gone up so much that green energy looks much more attractive.”

Johnson Controls provides services that optimize the use of energy. In corrections facilities, at school institutions, and at local businesses, the company conducts assessments on where and how facilities can save money and benefit the environment.

“With over 70 projects going on across the country, Johnson Controls was able to leverage their best practices and bring them to the State of Indiana,” says Charles McGinnis, National Director for State Government.

So how does corrections fit green energy into the game plan? In Indiana, it started with an energy assessment of each facility’s utility consumption.

“We were losing heat and spending lots of money on light fixtures and water loss,” says Donahue. “We realized that if we modernized some of our facilities with green energy technology, we could help those facilities hold up over time and save money in the process.”

The Plainfield Correctional and Re-Entry Education Facility, Pendleton Correctional Facility, Westville Correctional and Maximum Control Unit and the Indiana State Prison were chosen because they are the state’s least energy-efficient, and consumed the most electric and gas. So they were a natural place to start. If officials see the results predicted, other Indiana facilities will begin transitioning to green energy.

Small changes and big savings

Going green will begin by installing water faucets that automatically shut off after a certain amount of time.. More efficient light bulbs will replace fixtures, preventing the needless use of power. The new corn boilers will generate heat as they work, which will reduce energy costs.

In addition to the environmental benefits, and the use of less natural gas, corrections officials also are pleased that the changes will not cost tax payers more money.

“We discovered that the energy savings we will see on a monthly basis will be enough for these changes to pay for themselves,” says Donahue. “In less than ten years, we will have paid for all of these

improvements and experienced millions of dollars in savings.”

Donahue says estimates that these changes will also impact Indiana’s environment.

“Corn is certainly plentiful in Indiana,” says Donahue. “But the really important part is that it’s such a clean source of fuel. It burns cleanly and it will reduce carbon dioxide emissions tremendously.”

According to Donahue, the new energy switch is a win-win situation for all. Taxpayers save money, corrections agencies no longer struggle with the fluctuation of natural gas prices, and the environment benefits from a reduction in wasted resource.

For more information about using green energy, visit Johnson Controls at <http://www.johnsoncontrols.com/> or call the Indiana DOC at 317.232.5711

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.